
**JUDICIAL OFFICERS:
AUTHORITY & RESPONSIBILITY**

INTERPRETER BENCH CARD

CONTACT:

LaKesha Triggs

lakesha.triggs@courts.in.gov

Direct: 317-234-9567

30 S. Meridian St., Suite 500

Indianapolis, IN 46204

Main: 317-232-2542

Fax: 317-233-6586

Introduction

The state of Indiana provides court services to a wide range of people, including those who speak limited or no English and those who are deaf or hard-of-hearing. Limited English proficiency (LEP) means the inability to adequately understand or communicate effectively in English because of where a person was born or because of a disability. These LEP individuals most likely will request a court interpreter in their native language to provide interpreting services during court proceedings.

The decision to appoint an interpreter is a very important task for judicial officers. There is a need for a higher degree of coordination and uniformity regarding interpretation in courtrooms. Therefore, judicial officers must be provided with a uniformed guide regarding working with court interpreters during court proceedings.

The following is a bench card which provides a concise step by step guide for judicial officers to reference when appointing court interpreters. It gives information about evaluating the need for a court interpreter, information about the Language Line service, and the criteria for qualifying an interpreter if a certified interpreter is not available. In addition, the bench card provides the oath that all judicial officers must administer on the record to the interpreter. To request copies of the bench card, please contact Staff Attorney LaKesha Triggs.



WORKING WITH INTERPRETERS

EVALUATE THE NEED

The decision to appoint an interpreter should be made as early as possible. If unsure of the need, voir dire the litigant by asking open-ended questions in English during a brief hearing.

QUESTIONS TO ESTABLISH NEED:

- How did you arrive at court today?
- How did you learn English?
- What is the most difficult thing about communicating in English?

USE LANGUAGE LINE

To access
Language Line, call
800-874-9426

The Indiana Supreme Court has a telephone interpreting service, Language Line. Use it for brief routine matters, NOT for trials, guilty pleas or evidentiary proceedings.

QUALIFY THE INTERPRETER

The judge is responsible for appointing an interpreter AND responsible for qualifying the interpreter, including both in-person and over-the-phone interpreters, on the record.

Ind. R. of Evid. 604,
Tesfamariam v.
Woldenhaimanot,
956 N.E.2d 118
(Ind. Ct. App. 2011)

SWEAR IN THE INTERPRETER

Administer the oath on the record.

Do you solemnly swear (or affirm) that you will justly, truly, and impartially interpret to “____” the oath about to be administered to him (her), and the questions which may be asked of him (her), and the answers that he (she) shall give to such questions, relative to the cause now under consideration before this court so help you God (or under the pains and penalties of perjury)? Ind. Code § 34-45-1-5

State Court Administration – January 2016

Last modified 2/3/16